KĪRTIPATĀKĀ OF VIDYĀPATI

by

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Vidyāpati, the celebrated poet of Mithilā was a versatile genius. He was a great poet, an erudite scholar, a patron of music and dancing, an active diplomat, a scholarly *Smṛtikāra* and a devout devotee of Śiva. What is more he could write with equal ease and perfection in as many as four different languages, namely, Sanskrit, Prakrit, *Apabhraṁsa (Avahaṭṭa*) and Maithilī. He composed poems on love and devotion, he is the author of a treatise on law, a book of short stories, two books describing grim battles and amour of kings, a drama and a very interesting book on letter-writing (perhaps only of its kind in Sanskrit).

Kīrtipatākā is one of the two Avahaṭṭa books of Vidyāpati, the other being *Kīrtilatā*. While three manuscripts of the latter have been found in different parts of India, all in comparatively good condition, unfortunately only one manuscript of *Kīrtipatākā* is available and that too is not complete. This manuscript is in the possession of the Nepal Darbar Library. Pages numbering 9 to 29 are missing.. The manuscript is in the Tirhuta script and is dated La. Sam. 426[1] corresponding to 1535 A. D. To Dr. Umesh Mishra goes the credit for obtaining a transcript copy of it in Devanāgari script from the original Nepal Darbar Library manuscript and getting it published.

Kīrtipatākā as is evident from the name of the book was written to perpetuate the memory and victories of Śiva Siṁha, the great friend and patron of Vidyāpati. The book as is available today consists of two parts, the first one describing the amours of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the second one in which a grim battle ending in victory of Rājā Śiva Siṁha has been described in detail. In the last two paragraphs the topic suddenly changes, we find that Rājā Śivasiṁha having lost his way is wandering in a dense forest near Simraon, he does not have even a water-pot with him and is hungry and thirsty. Then suddenly the book ends. In the last few lines the poet sings a paneagry to his reverred

१. इति श्री विद्यापतिविरचितायां कीर्त्तिपताकायां ··सम्पूर्णः ।। शुभमस्तु ल० सं० ४२६ ज्येष्ठ वदि ८····यं पु म् ।
– Kirtipatākā, p. 24, Edited by Dr. U. Mishra.

friend telling us that the name and fame of the king have spread far and wide, songs of his glory are heard in every field or farm, house or hamlet. Here the name of the book *Kīrtipatākā* is also mentioned. How and in what circumstances after the victory over a Yavana King Rājā Śivasiṁha was forced to seek refuge in dense forest and lost his way there remains a mystery.

There are other unsolved riddles about the book. In the first nine pages (5 to 14 of the published book) the subject matter is love and amorous sports of Kṛṣṇa with Gopīs, although here as elsewhere the names of Kṛṣṇa and Gopīs seem to have been mentioned to provide only a thin veil on the love and amorous sports of ordinary human beings. Then suddenly the theme changes and from 14th page onwards Śivasiṁha appears on the scene in place of Rāi Arjuna, whose name only had been mentioned hitherto. The Rājā challenges the Muslim King and incurs his wrath. The sultan leads an expedition against Tirhut. A grim battle is fought. Hindu army though much smaller in number as compared to the invading hordes fights valiantly, inspired by the courage and exhortations of Śivasiṁha. The invaders are routed and are forced to fall back. No quarter is given to the routed enemy. That this battle is not a fiction but a historical fact is evident from the names of warriors mentioned here. We find Harapati, Mudrāhastaka (a post equivalent to treasurer), son of Vidyāpati Vijjyahara a minister (this name appears in the *Puruṣaparīkṣā* also as well as in several padas in Prakrit Paiṅglam), Damodara[2] and Rajaballava[3]—ministers (these names occur in several padas of Vidyāpati). The subject-matter of the last two paragraphs has already been discussed.

How the love-theme changes into the theme of grim battle or Rāi Arjuna is replaced by Rājā Śivasiṁha remains a mystery. Is it not possible that the two portions—the *Śṛṅgāra prakaraṇa* dedicated to Rāi Arjuna and the *Yuddha prakaraṇa* describing the victory and subsequent flight of Sivasiṁha belong to two different books ? The first nine sheets of the one and the concludlng sheets of the other might have been stitched together and come to be known as parts of the same book. Once this was accepted the whole book was taken to be *Kīrtipatākā*, as this name only is clearly mentioned at the end of the book. The learned editor of *Kīrtipatākā* has tried to explain this abrupt change-over from the erotic to the martial in following words :

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2. Mitra-Majumdar, Vidyāpati, Pada no 226.
3. Ibid, Pada no. 222.

"This latter portion seems to illustrate the dictum enunciated early in the book that a successful King ought to excel both in love and war."[4]

i. This argument, however, does not seem to be tenable for the simple reason that in the two portions two different kings have been mentioned. On page six of this book the poet addresses Rāi Arjuna and says that he should enjoy the pleasures of sex that were enjoyed by Lord Madhusūdana in the antiquity. But when the scene changes and the exploits of war are being described no where is Rāi Arjuna to be seen. Here Śivasiṁha and his associates occupy the arena. Thus excellence in love and war seem to be the attributes not of one but two different people.

ii. That the poet did not think excellence in love to be an essential attribute of one being excellent in war also is borne out from the casual manner in which he has treated love in his *Kāma prakaraṇa* in *Puruṣapari* There only three stories and that of *Anukula, Dakṣiṇa* and *Ghasmāra* nāy ks have been described.[5]

iii. In *Kīrtipatākā* itself the poet tells us that love tempered with piety is ideal.[6] On page 7 the poet has described the attributes of a great king. In this context too he has nowhere said that excellence in love goes together with excellence in war. In *Puruṣparīkṣā* Rājā Lakṣmaṇa Sen has been described as Dakṣina nāyaka. He is brave in war and faithful in love. Not the excessive abandon to sports of love and sex but fulfilment of the pledge given to one's wedded wife is the ideal exemplified therein.[7]

iv. In this connection it is worth mentioning that Rāi Arjuna was a cousin of Śivasiṁha. He seems to have been on inimical terms with the Rājā. In the colophon of *Likhanāvali* Purāditya Girināroyaṇa, King of Rājabanailī is credited with having defeated and killed Rāi Arjuna. Now, this Purāditya was a great and faithful friend of Rājā Śivasiṁha. There is no doubt about that. Otherwise how could Rājā Śivasiṁha have sent his family to Rājabanailī on the eve of his second battle with the Muslims. His family lived there for eight years under the guardianship

4. Introduction to Kirtipatākā, Edited by Dr. Umesh Mishra, p.—8.
5. Purusa-pariksā, Stories 36, 37 & 38.
6. "धम्म सहित सिंगार रस कब्व कला बहुरंग" ।
Kirtipatākā, p. 6.
7. दक्षिण नायक कथा, (Purusa-pariksā).

of Vidyāpati is also well known. Thus it seems highly improbable that Vidyāpati could have chosen to begin *īrtipatākā*—a book describing the great deeds of his beloved patron—with the eulogy of Rāi Arjuna, his sworn and inveterate enemy.

In no other work of Vidyāpati we find the names of two different Kings mentioned in the beginning and at the end. There is no reason why *Kīrtipatākā* should begin with eulogies of Rāi Arjuna and end with those of Rājā Śivasiṁha:

Kīrtipatākā seems to have been written after the defeat and disappearance of Rājā Śivasiṁha. Vidyāpati was now not the same blithe gay songster that he was during his early years. This is proved by the much fewer numbers of his love songs dedicated to kings other than Śivasiṁha. To Rāi Arjuna only five love songs have been dedicated. Does it not seem highly improbable that the poet would have reverted back to the descriptions of uninhabited sports of love and sex in his old age, much less to provide a back-ground to the valiant deeds of Rājā Śivasiṁha. If Rāi Arjuna of *Kīrtipatākā* is the same as the one mentioned in the colophon of *Likhanāvalī*, whom Purāditya had defeated and killed, the *Sṛṅgāra-prakaraṇa* of this book must have been written at a much early stage of Vidyāpati's life. From this it becomes clear that the *Yuddha-prakaraṇa* could not have been the part of the same book. If, however, it is assumed that Rāi Arjuna of this book refers to some other kings not connected with the Oinavāra clan, then too it would be highly improbable that the description of the glorious deeds of Rājā Śivasiṁha should find place in a book dedicated to and written in honour of some king not at all related to him.

From the above do we not arrive at this conclusion that in *Kīrtipatākā* as it is found today parts of manuscripts of two or three different stages of the life of the poet have some how or other got mixed up. This is my humble suggestion and I would invite attention of the learned editor of *Kīrtipatākā* as also other scholars of Vidyāpati-literature to this.

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